

For immediate release  
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## USIBWC SELECTS RIO GRANDE CITIZENS' FORUM BOARD MEMBERS; RIO GRANDE SALINITY AND RIVER CHANNEL MAINTENANCE ON AGENDA FOR FEBRUARY 7 MEETING

The United States Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission (USIBWC) announces a public meeting of the Rio Grande Citizens' Forum at 6:30 p.m. on February 7 at USIBWC Headquarters, 4171 N. Mesa Street, Building C, El Paso, Texas. The purpose of the forum is to promote the exchange of information between the USIBWC and the community about the Commission's projects and related issues in the area.

This will be the first meeting for new board members who were recently appointed to two-year terms by U.S. Commissioner Carlos Marin. The new board members are:

- Zay Clopton - New Mexico rancher
- Douglas Echlin - Coronado Neighborhood/Civic Association
- Ed Fierro - El Paso Water Utilities
- John Hernandez - Elephant Butte Irrigation District
- Conrad Keyes, Jr. - Paso del Norte Watershed Council Executive Committee
- Terry McMillan - Texas Commission on Environmental Quality

Additionally, the USIBWC renewed the appointments of the following incumbent board members:

- Lupe Garcia - Hispanic Farmers and Ranchers of America, La Union Soil and Water Conservation District
- Joseph Groff - Chihuahuan Desert Wildlife Rescue
- Alisa Jorgensen - Save the Valley Neighborhood Association
- Irene Tejeda - Paso del Norte Water Task Force

The February 7 meeting will include presentations on two topics of regional concern for the Rio Grande – salinity and maintenance of the river channel to safely and efficiently effect water deliveries and convey flood flows.

Fred M. Phillips, Professor of Hydrology at New Mexico Tech, will discuss his research on natural sources of saline water in the Rio Grande. The upper Rio Grande (Colorado, New Mexico, and a small part of West Texas) is notable for the progressive salinization of its waters. Total dissolved solids content of the river water increases from an annual average of about 100 mg/L at Del Norte, Colorado to 250 mg/L at Otowi, New Mexico to 800 mg/L at El Paso, Texas. The cause of this progressive salinization has been investigated for the past 100 years, without conclusive results. Contributing factors include evapotranspirative concentration during repeated use in subsequent irrigation districts down the length of the river, reservoir evaporation, inputs from saline tributaries and wastewater treatment plants,

and geological (subsurface) inputs of salts. Phillips has used geochemical tracer studies and dynamic modeling to quantify the sources and amounts of increase. These studies have demonstrated that natural sources, including tributaries and subsurface inputs, constitute a significant percent of the increase. Historical data show that the magnitude of salinity increase in the Rio Grande in the past, even prior to the construction of Elephant Butte Dam, was similar to today.

In other business, Tony Solo, Project Manager of the USIBWC's Upper Rio Grande Project, will discuss river channel maintenance activities being undertaken during the current non-irrigation season. The U.S. Section maintains the river channel to improve the channel's capacity to convey flood flows and in order to effect delivery of water to U.S. users and Mexico. Maintenance activities include erosion control, bank stabilization, and sediment removal. Sediment that accumulated during normal conditions and as a result of last summer's rains is being targeted. Work is being done at Thurman Arroyo, Placitas Arroyo, Trujillo Arroyo, and Hersey Arroyo in the Rio Grande Canalization Project in southern New Mexico as well as American Dam in El Paso, Texas. The U.S. Section is also coordinating with the Mexican Section for sediment removal in the Rio Grande Rectification Project at El Paso, Texas-Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua as funding becomes available.

The Rio Grande Citizens' Forum was established by the USIBWC in 1999 to facilitate the exchange of information regarding USIBWC activities on the Rio Grande between Percha Dam, New Mexico and Fort Quitman, Texas. It is designed to bring together community members, enabling the early and continued two-way flow of information, concerns, values, and needs between USIBWC and the general public, environmentalists, irrigation districts, municipalities, and others interested in the river.

The International Boundary and Water Commission, United States and Mexico, is responsible for applying the boundary and water treaties between the two countries and settling differences that arise in their application.

For more information:

Sally Spener  
915-832-4175  
sallyspener@ibwc.state.gov

## **RIO GRANDE CITIZENS' FORUM**

**Wednesday, February 7, 2007**

**6:30 - 8:30 P.M.**

U.S. Section, International Boundary and Water Commission  
4171 N. Mesa Street, The Commons, Building C  
(just south of Executive Center Boulevard)  
El Paso, TX

### **Agenda**

- Welcome - Ken Rakestraw, Citizens' Forum Co-Chair, USIBWC
- Introduction of Board Members
- Natural Sources of Saline Water in the Rio Grande - Fred M. Phillips, Professor of Hydrology, New Mexico Tech
- Rio Grande Flood Control Project Maintenance - Tony Solo, Project Manager, Upper Rio Grande Project, USIBWC
- Public Comment
- Board Discussion
- Suggested Future Agenda Items

If you have a disability that you wish to self-identify confidentially that requires accommodation, please advise us ahead of time.

For more information, call 915-832-4175 or e-mail [sallyspener@ibwc.state.gov](mailto:sallyspener@ibwc.state.gov)